

DAMASCUS

1926

HAURAN

1926..

File 94..

Hauran..

WAS/HBM

REGISTERED 432
N° OF FIVE 94
SERIAL N. 1

Damascus,

11th February, 1926.

No. 61

Sir,

I have the honour to invite a reference to my despatch No. 119 of July 15th last, in which I described the beginnings of the separatist movement organised by the French in the Hauran.

2. Since then the question has been fitfully raised but the absurdity of separating the Hauran from Damascus seemed to render its serious consideration unlikely. Damascus finances the crops of the Hauran, which has been entirely dependent on the Syrian Capital for ages.

3. Latterly Capitaine Coustillère, formerly French Adviser at Hama, was sent on a special mission to the Hauran. He is apparently the Political Adviser while Capitaine Huguenet remains the Administrative Adviser. Capitaine Coustillère has been raising native irregulars in the Hauran to fight against the Druses. He has also been among the Bedouins of the Lega and inciting them to attack the Jebel Druse. These Bedouins

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Secretary of State
for Foreign Affairs,
Etc., Etc., Etc.,
Foreign Office.

LONDON.

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Bagdad (44), Beyrout (52), Aleppo (35).

Bedouins are the most miserable and infamous of all the desert folk. Their volcanic country is almost inaccessible, and from it they sally forth on marauding expeditions far from home. Some of them took part in the attacks on the trans-desert routes last year. The arming of such irresponsible and predatory Bedouin seems the height of recklessness, for, though ^{may} they make a few raids on the Jebel Druse, they are much more likely to use their arms against other and inoffensive people who would be less formidable to attack than the Druses.

4. Capitaine Coustillère's next feat was actively to revive the Hauran independence movement but until quite lately I understood that the higher French Authorities set their face against such an extravagant application of the principle of rule by division. However, Capitaine Coustillère came to Damascus with a Hauran deputation to meet Monsieur de Jouvenel during the latter's recent visit here, and I am informed that the French High Commissioner, though at first unwilling to accede to Capitaine Coustillère's arguments, at last allowed himself to be convinced and agreed to the separation of the Hauran from Damascus.

5. It is sincerely to be hoped that, at the last moment, the French will reconsider their decision and not allow themselves to be dragged by amateur political officers into such an imprudent enterprise, which will only confirm all native elements in their distrust of France and singularly complicate the administrative task of the French themselves.

I have the honour to be,

With the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant

(SIGNED) W.A. SMART.

WAS/AT

REC^d
REGISTER N° 471
N° OF FILE 94c
SERIAL N° 2

Damascus,

15th February, 1926.

No. 67

sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 61 of the 11th instant, I have the honour to report that the state of siege has been raised in the Hauran.

2. This measure is doubtless in the nature of a favour intended to encourage the separatist movement but I am informed by impartial natives that relatively the Hauran is much quieter now. It is of course powerfully dominated by French troops, and its comparative flatness renders any resistance to such strong armed force a matter of considerable difficulty.

3. Presumably elections will shortly be held there, in accordance with Article 2 of the Electoral Decree, the text of which was enclosed in my despatch No. 283 of December 27th last.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,

sir,

Your most obedient,
humble servant

His Majesty's Principal
Secretary of state for
Foreign Affairs,
Ec., Etc., Etc.,
Foreign Office.

(Sgd) W.A. Smart *WAS*

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Beyrout 58, Aleppo 38.

WAS/AT

REC^d
REGISTER N 623
N° OF FILE 94c
SERIAL N 3

Damascus,

24th February, 1926.

No. 82

Sir,

In continuation of correspondence ending with my despatch No. 67 of the 15th instnat, I have the honour to report that the Envoy Extraordinary of the French High Commissioner has issued a decree fixing the elections of the first degree in the Hauran for March 12th and of the second degree for March 19th.

2. This is presumably regarded as a further step in the moral isolation of wicked Damascus from the well-behaved parts of Syria. The Hauran elections will of course be "made" by Commandant Coustillere and Captain Huguenet, and the deputies elected will no doubt be suitably separatist and may even discover that the welfare of the Hauran would be best ensured by a French Governor in the person of one of these officers.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient,
humble servant

His Majesty's Principal
Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs,
Etc., Etc., Etc.,
Foreign Office.

(Sgd) W.A. Smart *was*

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Aleppo 55.

WAS/AT

REC^d

REGISTER N^o 682

N^o OF FILE 94c

SERIAL N. 4

Damascus,

1st March, 1926.

*The possibility of these
simulations + perphorations
is shown by the events, for none of
the former events occurred - fact*

No.91

Sir,

I have the honour to invite a reference to the third paragraph of my despatch No.61 of the 11 ultimo regarding the arming of the Lejah Bedouins by Commandant Coustillère. The word "among" in the seventh line of that paragraph was of course a slip for "arming", as no doubt was evident from the rest of the paragraph.

2. News has been received here that these Lejah Bedouins are attacking the Christian village of Khabeb, 3 miles west of the station of that name on the Hejaz railway 69 kilometres south of Damascus. Still more serious is the report that they have for the moment made common cause with the Druzes, bands of whom are said to be already in the Lejah.

3. Yesterday the railway was cut between the stations of Jebab (63 kilometres from Damascus) and Khabeb, apparently by a mixed force of Druzes and Lejah Bedouins. The train for Deraa which had already reached Misimiyyeh

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(50)

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Aleppo 62.

(50 kilometres from Damascus) had to return here, and the train for Haifa, by which I had intended to proceed to Jerusalem, did not leave Damascus to-day.

4. This movement in the Lejah may be a serious menace to the railway. The Lejah is with difficulty accessible to troops, and bands operating from that volcanic country would be peculiarly well-placed for raids against the railway between Misriyyeh and Ezra (91 kilometres from Damascus). Travellers for Palestine from Damascus are beginning to proceed via Beyrout. Hitherto the southern line has generally been cut near Damascus, which travellers, forewarned, did not leave in such cases. Now, the unfortunate traveller runs the risk of having to proceed fifty kilometres as far as Misriyyeh and of then having to return to Damascus, if the line has again been cut in the proximity of the Lejah.

5. If the Haifa train does not leave Damascus on the 3rd instant, I propose to proceed to Jerusalem via Beyrout.

6. The reckless arming of these Lejah Bedouins by the French seems already to be producing the results indicated as likely in paragraph 3 of my above-mentioned despatch. I should not be at all surprised if eventually many of these variegated elements armed by the French (see paragraph 3 of my despatch No. 77 of the 23rd ultimo) were to make common cause with the rebels and remain a durable factor of disorder in the country.

I have the honour to be,
With the highest respect,

sir,

Your most obedient,
humble servant

(Sgd) W.A. Smart *WAS*

*S. Helmont Ke
would be quite
by this means*

WAS/AT

REC^d
REGISTER N. 816
N° OF FILE 94C.
SERIAL N. 15

Damascus,

18th March, 1926.

No. 105

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 82 of the 24th ultimo, I have the honour to report that the Hauran Elections have been postponed sine die.

2. Captain Huguenet, while I was recently his guest at Deraa, told me that the heavy rains had made circulation so difficult that it would not have been easy to induce voters to proceed to the polling-centres at the dates fixed.

3. It seems that the real reason of the postponement was the likelihood that the Hauran would imitate Homs and Hama and boycott the elections.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your most obedient,
humble servant

(Signed) W.A. Smart *WAS*

His Majesty's Principal
Secretary of State for
Foreign Affairs,
Etc., Etc., Etc.,
Foreign Office.

LONDON, S.W. 1.

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Aleppo 73.